

Appendix S

BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Evaluation and Forest Service Zoological Areas



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S. BLM ACEC Evaluation and Forest Service Zoological Areas

S.1 Introduction

During the scoping process for this LUPA/EIS the BLM invited the public to nominate or recommend areas on public lands for GRSG and their habitat to be considered as ACECs. In response to this invitation, the BLM received ACEC nominations from a number of interested organizations. In addition to nominating ACECs on BLM-administered lands, during scoping, interested organizations also identified potential GRSG-related RNAs for National Forest System lands.

FLPMA Section 103 (a) defines ACECs as public lands for which special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used or when no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values; fish and wildlife resources; or other natural systems or processes or to protect life and safety from natural hazards. Section 202(c)(3) of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires that priority be given to the designation and protection of areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC).

Research Natural Areas are areas with valuable ecological resources. These areas are protected and maintained in natural conditions, for the purposes of conserving biological diversity, conducting non-manipulative research and monitoring, and fostering education.

The identification and establishment of a national network of RNAs is Congressionally mandated in the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (36 CFR Sec. 219.25; 36 CFR 251.23). The need for, and value of, research natural areas has a fundamental basis, as well, in NFMA which states that land and resource management plans will include a plan to monitor and evaluate the effects of implementing the management plan (36 CFR Sec. 219.11(d))

S.2 ACEC Nominations

During the scoping process for this LUPA/EIS the BLM received specific ACEC nominations in scoping letters submitted by Western Watersheds Project, Wild Earth Guardians and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition. The Wild Earth Guardians letter represented a consortium of environmental organizations. Nominated ACECs identified by Western Watersheds Project contained various amounts and extents of sage-grouse habitat and non-habitat. Both Wild Earth Guardians and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition nominated areas within identified preliminary priority habitat. The boundary of the and GYC externally nominated ACECs were developed through identifying preliminary priority habitat within southwestern Montana and the Upper Snake areas, as described in their scoping letter. Wild Earth Guardians proposed two separate scenarios: 1) all preliminary priority habitat areas excluding significantly impacted lands near active oil and gas wells; and 2) a system of ACECs to provide for habitat needs of GRSG. Both of these scenarios were evaluated. Under the first scenario all PPH areas were delineated and evaluated and this resulted in 16 separate areas in Idaho, Utah and southwestern Montana, grouped by local working group area. Under the second scenario BLM evaluated PPH areas to describe a system of nominated ACECs which, in addition occurring with PPH areas, also contain

relatively intact and high quality habitat. This evaluation resulted in 18 separate areas throughout Idaho.

Using the above mentioned criteria, nearly all identified preliminary priority sage-grouse habitat in Idaho and Southwestern Montana was included within an ACEC nomination.

S.3 ACEC Evaluation Process

Based on the nominations received, all identified PPH was taken through the evaluation process.

In compliance with BLM Manual 1613-Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, a BLM interdisciplinary team conducted an initial evaluation of all GRSG mapped occupied habitat to decide which if any areas should be carried forward for further evaluation in the land use planning process. The ACEC evaluations were conducted by the BLM's GRSGS core team, which included wildlife biologists and land use planners assigned to the project. Additional input was provided by specialists from each Field and District Office that has GRSG habitat within their respective boundaries. The BLM's multi-step evaluation process consisted of:

1. BLM core team evaluated external ACEC nominations to determine relevance and importance.
2. Habitat was broken down between southwestern Montana and Idaho, and within Idaho further delineated according to local working group boundaries.
3. Draft evaluation tables and maps were created that were reviewed by the full BLM IDT and ad hoc IDT members (which includes representatives from each field office).

S.4 Relevance and Importance Criteria

As mentioned in the introduction, to be considered for designation as an ACEC, an area must meet the requirements of relevance and importance as described in the Code of Federal Regulations (43 CFR 1610.7.2). The definitions for relevance and importance are as follows:

S.4.1 Relevance

An area is considered relevant if it contains one or more of the following:

1. A significant historic, cultural, or scenic value (for example, rare or sensitive archaeological resources and religious or cultural resources important to Native American Indians).
2. A fish and wildlife resource (for example, habitat for endangered, sensitive, or threatened species or habitat essential for maintaining species diversity).
3. A natural process or system (for example, endangered, sensitive, or threatened plant species; rare, endemic, or relict plants or plant communities; and rare geologic features).

4. A natural hazard (for example, areas of avalanche, dangerous flooding, landslides, unstable soils, seismic activity, or dangerous cliffs). A hazard caused by human action could meet the relevance criteria if it is determined through the resource management planning process that it has become part of the natural process.

S.4.2 Importance

The value, resource, system, process, or hazard described above must have substantial significance to satisfy the importance criteria, which generally means it is characterized by one or more of the following:

1. Has more than locally significant qualities that give it special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern, especially compared with any similar resource.
2. Has qualities or circumstances that make it fragile, sensitive, rare, irreplaceable, exemplary, unique, endangered, threatened, or vulnerable to change.
3. Has been recognized as warranting protection to order to satisfy national priority concerns or to carry out the mandates of FLPMA.

As part of the ACEC evaluation process the BLM determined that the mere presence of GRSG or GRSG habitat does not constitute a significant wildlife resource (43 CFR 1610.7.2). Direction associated with the BLM's National GRSG planning strategy asked each State to identify preliminary priority habitat (PPH). PPH comprises areas that have been identified as having the highest conservation value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. It was determined that areas nominated for ACEC Designation did not meet the relevance criteria if they were outside identified preliminary priority habitat. Therefore potential ACEC boundaries were identified based on PPH delineated areas.

As part of the external nominations, proposed ACECs extend across State boundaries. In addition Wild Earth Guardians and GYC's proposals included all PPH independent of administrative boundaries, for the purposes of this evaluation proposed ACECs include both BLM-administered and National Forest System lands. Forest Service does not designate ACECs and therefore any identification of special areas on Forest Service administered lands would be referred to as Zoological Areas.

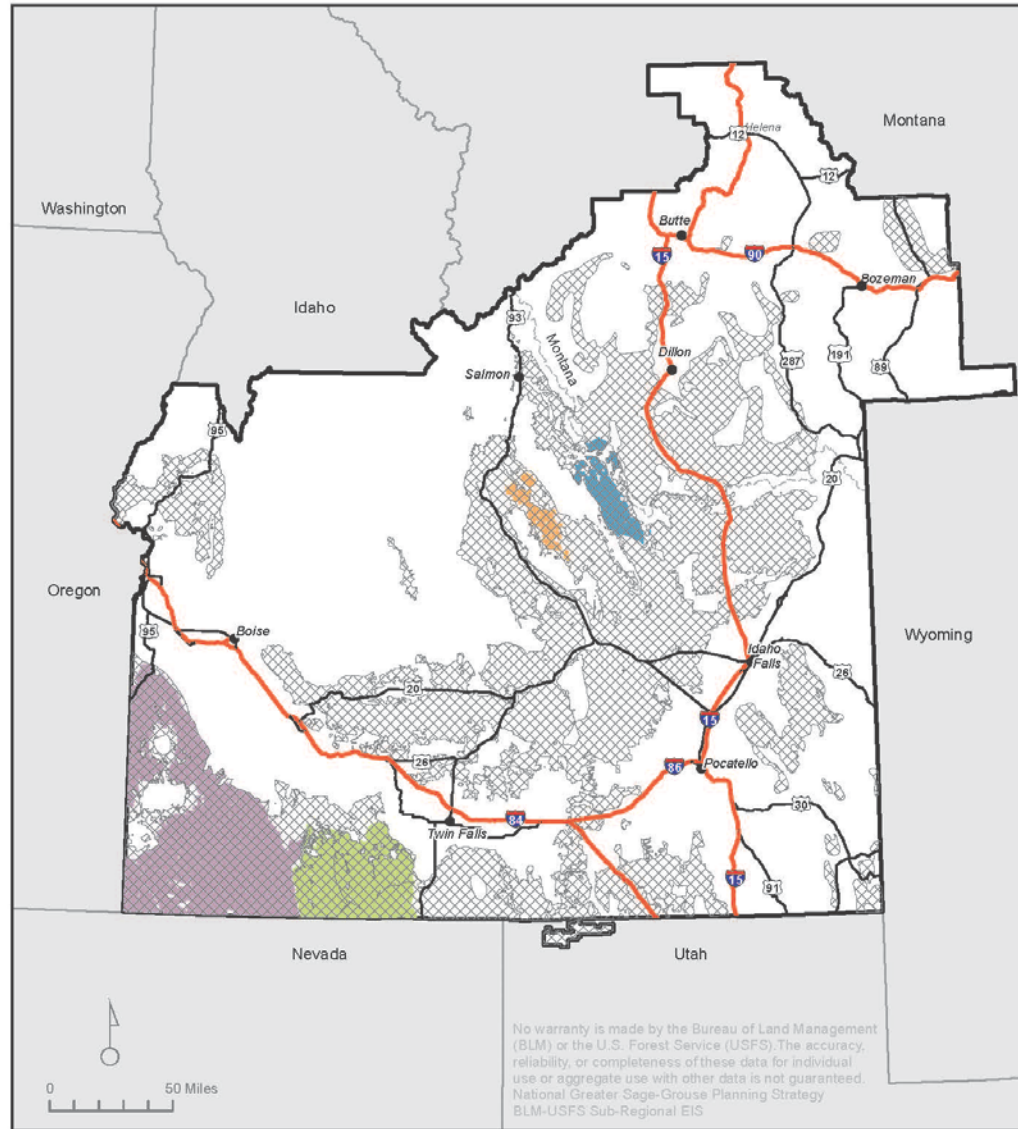
As a result of the evaluation process, it was determined that 7,272,100 BLM-acres delineated into 16 areas met the relevance criteria.

All areas that met the relevance criteria were determined to have importance because protection of GRSG is a national priority for BLM. **Table S.1**, Potential ACEC and Zoological Areas, includes information on each of the individual areas evaluated by the BLM and Forest Service. Nominations that met relevance and importance criteria are displayed on Maps H.1 – Western Watersheds; H.2 – Greater Yellowstone Coalition and Wild Earth Guardians All PPH Areas; H.3 – Wild Earth Guardians System of ACECs.

S.5 Zoological Areas

After the BLM completed its ACEC evaluation process, the Forest Service evaluated GRSG habitat adjacent to potential ACECs found to have relevance and importance. The Forest Service is considering designating these areas as Zoological Areas to ensure consistent management across the landscape. When considering Zoological Areas, the Forest Service is not required to go through the same screening criteria that the BLM is required to go through when considering ACEC designation. In addition to considering zoological areas that are contiguous to BLM-administered lands, the Forest Service is considering designating some disconnected GRSG habitat as a zoological area.

Proposed ACECs, Alternative C



- Occupied Habitat
- ID-01 ID-OR Borderlands and Owyhee Front
- ID-02 Sagebrush Sea
- ID-03 Pahsimeroi
- ID-04 Canyon\Big Timber Project & Birch Creek Watershed
- Analysis Boundary

Table S.1
Potential ACEC and Zoological Areas (ACEC refers to BLM areas, ZOA refers to Forest Service areas)

Delineation	Name	State	Description	Nominated By	Alternative	BLM Acres	FS Acres
ID-ACEC-C-01	ID-OR Borderlands and Owyhee Front	Idaho	BLM PPH within Owyhee and Bruneau Field Offices	Western Watersheds Project	C	1,795,610	0
ID-ACEC-C-02	Sagebrush Sea	Idaho	BLM PPH within the southern 2/3 of the Jarbidge Field Office	Western Watersheds Project	C	765,068	0
ID-ACEC-C-03	Pahsimeroi	Idaho	BLM PPH within the Pahsimeroi area of the Challis FO	Western Watersheds Project	C	128,579	0
ID-ACEC-C-04	Canyon/Big Timber Project and Birch Creek Watershed	Idaho	BLM PPH within the Canyon/Big Timber Project Area	Western Watersheds Project	C	169,796	0
MT-ACEC-F-01a MT-ZOA-F-01a	Clark Canyon	Montana	PPH West of Dillon	Greater Yellowstone Coalition & Wild Earth Guardians	F	198,770	29,845
MT-ACEC-F-02a MT-ZOA-F-02a	Lima	Montana	PPH West of I-15 and South of Clark Canyon Area	Greater Yellowstone Coalition & Wild Earth Guardians	F	54,393	52,698
MT-ACEC-F-03a MT-ZOA-F-03a	Red Rock	Montana	PPH Area primarily East of I-15	Greater Yellowstone Coalition & Wild Earth Guardians	F	202,088	83,509
ID-ACEC-F-01a	Owyhee	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	1,796,060	0
ID-ACEC-F-02a	Jarbidge	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	769,426	0
ID-ACEC-F-03a ID-ZOA-F-01a	Shoshone Basin	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	122,674	66,850

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Delineation	Name	State	Description	Nominated By	Alternative	BLM Acres	FS Acres
ID-ACEC-F-04a ID-ZOA-F-02a	South Magic Valley	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	253,875	134,371
ID-ACEC-F-05a ID-ZOA-F-03a	Curlew	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	177,791	41,231
ID-ACEC-F-06a ID-ZOA-F-04a	Mountain Home	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	83,576	15,467
ID-ACEC-F-07a ID-ZOA-F-05a	North Magic Valley	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	997,642	13,408
ID-ACEC-F-08a	Big Desert	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	559,546	0
ID-ACEC-F-09a ID-ZOA-F-06a	Upper Snake	Idaho	PPH within areas described in July 2006 Idaho Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan; All PPH Areas	Greater Yellowstone Coalition; Wild Earth Guardians	F	936,010	182,093
ID-ACEC-F-10a ID-ZOA-F-07a	Challis	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	981,609	301,769
ID-ACEC-F-11a	West Central	Idaho	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians	F	77,224	0
ID-ACEC-F-12a ID-ZOA-F-08a	East Idaho Uplands	Idaho	PPH within areas described in July 2006 Idaho Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan; All PPH Areas	Greater Yellowstone Coalition; Wild Earth Guardians	F	55,826	1,623
UT-ZOA-F-01a	Sawtooth	Utah	All PPH Areas	Wild Earth Guardians		0	71,827
ID-ACEC-F-01b	Tent Creek	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	37,337	0
ID-ACEC-F-02b	Garat 4	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	27,411	0
ID-ACEC-F-03b	Garat 3	Idaho	Extensive System of	Wild Earth	F	12,776	0

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Delineation	Name	State	Description	Nominated By	Alternative	BLM Acres	FS Acres
			ACECs	Guardians			
ID-ACEC-F-04b	Garat 2	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	13,166	0
ID-ACEC-F-05b	Garat 1	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	2,284	0
ID-ACEC-F-06b	Deep Creek Owyhee	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	58,823	0
ID-ACEC-F-07b	Deep Creek Bruneau	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	59,315	0
ID-ACEC-F-08b	Bruneau	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	306,508	0
ID-ACEC-F-09b	Big Springs	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	19,618	0
ID-ACEC-F-10b	Jarbridge Foothills	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	121,711	0
ID-ACEC-F-11b	Shoshone Basin/South Hills	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	163,182	0
ID-ACEC-F-12b	Sawmill Canyon Sage-Grouse	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	4,979	0
ID-ACEC-F-13b	Wedge Butte	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	34,268	0
ID-ACEC-F-14b	Wildhorse	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	210,250	0
ID-ACEC-F-15b	Quaking Aspen Butte	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	148,345	0
ID-ACEC-F-16b	Bear Lake	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	42,909	0

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Delineation	Name	State	Description	Nominated By	Alternative	BLM Acres	FS Acres
ID-ACEC-F-17b	Table Butte/Camas Butte	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	72,903	0
ID-ACEC-F-18b ID-ZOA-F01b	Medicine Lodge/Birch Creek	Idaho	Extensive System of ACECs	Wild Earth Guardians	F	112,184	165

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